

North Treatment Facility Project

Summary of Interviews with Community Leaders

King County Department of Natural Resources

May 2000



Clean Water – A Sound Investment

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Introduction

In November 1999, King County approved its Regional Wastewater Services Plan. One aspect of this plan includes building a new regional wastewater treatment facility somewhere in north King or south Snohomish County by 2010. King County is just beginning the process to site the new treatment plant, its associated conveyance and marine outfall.

To ensure a successful siting process, an early series of leadership interviews on the siting process were conducted. This document is a summary of the comments received in these interviews with community leaders. In April and May 2000, over 100 individuals participated in more than 40 interviews through individual and group meetings. Interview participants included: county, city and special district elected officials and staff; and representatives from tribal agencies, environmental organizations, business and regulatory agencies. The list of those interviewed is included in the Appendix.

Interview Goals and Objectives

The purpose of these interviews was to solicit input from community leaders in King and Snohomish counties on preliminary thoughts and ideas regarding the process to site the new north treatment facility, its associated conveyance and marine outfall. In each meeting, King County's Department of Natural Resources representatives presented initial thoughts on the overall siting process, including: public involvement methods under consideration, ideas on composition and role of a Siting Advisory Committee, a proposal to issue a Request for Nominations of sites from communities, and the timeline and process to select a site. Comments were also solicited on how best to work with each local jurisdiction or organization and on other individuals and/or organizations that should be involved in this process.

Summary of Comments

This report summarizes the comments received on the following themes:

- Public involvement
- Siting Advisory Committee
- Request for nominations of sites
- Timeline and process to select a site
- General issues and comments

Public Involvement

During the interviews the issue of public involvement received a great deal of attention. Involving the public is key to ensuring a successful siting process. A majority of the participants felt that the public may not show interest until the number of sites are narrowed to a point of serious consideration. However, these same participants also stressed the importance of carrying out efforts to involve community

groups and the general public as early on in the process as possible. Others noted that each jurisdiction has their own methods to involve their local communities and it is important to consult the mayors and city councils on the best methods to utilize. Comments raised on how to involve, educate and engage the public are detailed in this section.

Involve and Engage the Public

All participants agreed that it is very important to involve and engage the public throughout the siting process. Several elected officials noted that it is crucial to demonstrate that the public has been involved before key decisions have to be made. The following methods to involve the public in the siting process were suggested by a number of participants:

- hold public workshops and public meetings
- be willing to hold meetings with individuals
- schedule public meetings during weekdays, evenings and week-ends
- establish a website for the project that is updated regularly and offers the opportunity for public comment
- conduct focus groups
- utilize existing tools for information purposes: place inserts in utility bills, place meeting notices and articles in newsletters that are produced and distributed by jurisdictions and community councils, make use of county and city cable television stations

Education is Key

Several participants commented that the stigma of wastewater treatment plants continues to exist and that there is a need for general education on such facilities. Being open about both the negative and positive impacts was stressed. Nearly all participants suggested that the amenities associated with these kinds of facilities be discussed and highlighted. Several noted that the ordinance adopting the Regional Wastewater Services Plan calls for mitigation to be at least ten percent of the project costs; these participants stressed the importance of explaining the role of mitigation in meetings and public forums. Others suggested inviting neighbors of the South Plant in Renton and the West Point Plant in Seattle to participate in public meetings and talk about what it's like to have a treatment plant as a neighbor. The use of graphics and videos that show how plants are sited today was also recommended, along with sharing lessons learned from the siting, construction and operations of other treatment facilities.

A number of participants also noted that it will be necessary to explain why these facilities are needed, how much they will cost, and how they will be paid for. Others emphasized that it is important to explain that the decision to construct these facilities has been made and to strive to avoid debates about the decisions that have already been made.

Siting Advisory Committee

Another important goal of these interviews was to solicit ideas to help shape the composition and role of the Siting Advisory Committee. A majority of the participants felt that this committee should be comprised of high level members, including elected officials and leaders from regional environmental, business and labor organizations. Most agreed that committee members should be ‘regional thinkers’. There were some who felt that this committee should be more citizen based and all-inclusive. Others cautioned that citizens would lose interest if sites in their jurisdiction or neighborhood are not included as ‘serious contenders’. Nearly all participants suggested that there be at least one representative from each jurisdiction in the approximate site selection area on the committee. A majority of participants said members of this committee should be jointly appointed by the King County and Snohomish County Executives.

Several mentioned that community-based committees will be helpful once the sites are narrowed to a small number of serious candidates. A number of participants also commented on the need for a separate technical committee that can advise and support the Siting Advisory Committee.

In regards to the role of the Siting Advisory Committee, many noted that members will not want to be in the position of scoring or evaluating actual sites. Several suggested that a more appropriate role for this committee would be to participate in the development and review of the siting evaluation criteria and to provide oversight of the overall narrowing process.

Request for Nominations of Sites

Another objective of the siting process is to ensure that as many sites possible for the new treatment plant are considered and evaluated and that opportunities for private-public and public-public partnerships are explored. The idea of a ‘Community Nomination Process’ is based on the partnering process that took place to site King County’s Regional Justice Center, now located in the city of Kent. When asked what they thought about this concept, the majority of participants said it sounded like a good idea. A few participants expressed concerns that issuing a request for nominations of sites could lead to sites being nominated that will cause neighbors to become upset with one another.

Several suggestions were made regarding the contents of the application package for the request for nominations, including:

- send information to businesses, landowner associations and the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties
- include information on mitigation dollars and other economic benefits in the application package

- emphasize potential for developing partnerships, such as water reuse opportunities or shared facility siting
- include information on the need for sites for conveyance and the marine outfall

Timeline and process to select a site

King County will begin with a large number of potential sites and narrow that number through a series of steps over the next three years. The goal is to have a location selected by the end of 2002. Interview participants were informed about this process and asked for their thoughts and comments. Most participants thought that the process to narrow the field made sense. Some suggested that the narrowing be done as quickly as possible to avoid unnecessary concerns over sites that will not make the cut to be seriously considered. One participant noted that a linear process may be too rigid and suggested that flexibility be built into the process.

Several participants offered the following comments relating to criteria development:

- include community support as a criteria
- include potential partnerships as a criteria
- be sure to consider future needs in determining the minimum site size
- be sure to consider any restrictions resulting from the Growth Management Act

General Issues and Comments

Mitigation

The issue of mitigation was mentioned in nearly every meeting. Most participants are aware that the ordinance adopting the Regional Wastewater Services Plan calls for mitigation to be at least ten percent of the project costs, and they also suggested that the public be informed of this. The majority of participants stressed the importance of seeking out the needs of the communities in the approximate site selection area. Several noted that a number of communities have needs for soccer fields and other recreational facilities. Others mentioned that the facilities should be designed for multi-use purposes; they noted that their communities would like to see public facilities utilized to their fullest. Several also mentioned that King County staff should help communities visualize how these facilities could fit into their communities; it was also suggested that the art community be enlisted to help in this process. The need to consider nearshore mitigation was also mentioned due to the construction of a new marine outfall.

Impacts need to be addressed

A number of participants noted that communities will be concerned about odor and noise impacts, as well as impacts on property values and increased truck traffic due to the removal of biosolids. It was recommended that information be shared on how newer facilities have addressed these issues. As mentioned previously, many

participants stressed the importance of being open about the negative and positive impacts associated with wastewater treatment facilities. Two participants mentioned that the recent gas pipeline explosion in Bellingham may cause concern about the conveyance routes and facilities and suggested that pipeline concerns also be addressed.

Partnerships

Several interview participants expressed enthusiasm about the partnering possibilities that could be maximized with this project. Some commented that it would be prudent to investigate possibilities with golf courses, school districts, power companies and other industries. Other comments included incorporating programs such as water reuse and the conversion of methane to electricity to help facilitate potential partnerships.

Ensure the involvement of Snohomish County

Some interview participants were not aware that King County's wastewater service area includes approximately 46 square miles in south Snohomish County. Nearly all participants stressed the importance of ensuring the involvement of Snohomish County jurisdictions, and community, business and environmental organizations throughout the siting process. Several noted that it may be difficult to explain why King County would choose to site one of their public facilities in another county. One participant noted that it is very important to demonstrate how communities in Snohomish County can have a voice in the process.

Follow-up

In these interviews, a number of participants had specific suggestions on how to involve and communicate with their particular jurisdiction, agency or organization. These comments have been noted and will assist in the further development of the project's public involvement program. All participants will receive project newsletters and other public notices throughout the process, as well as have the opportunity to participate in future individual, group and public meetings.

Appendix -- Community Leaders Interviewed*

Listed below are the community leaders interviewed between April 6 - May 31, 2000.

| Office/Organization | Interview Attendees |
|--|---|
| Tribal Agencies: Muckleshoot Indian Tribe Suquamish Tribe Tulalip Tribes | Carla Carlson, Water Resource Specialist; Andy Dalton, Shellfish Biologist; Nancy Rapin, Water Quality Specialist; Glen St. Amant, Sr. Sediment Specialist; Isabel Tinoco, Fisheries Director; Karen Walter, Senior Watershed Manager; D.L. Holobaugh, Engineer John Sloan, Natural Resources Office Daryl Williams, Environmental Liaison; Derrick Toba, Shellfish Biologist |
| Snohomish County: Office of the Executive | Snohomish County Executive Bob Drewel; Peter Hahn, Director of Public Works |
| King County Council: Office of Councilmember David Irons Office of Councilmember Larry Phillips Office of Councilmember Louise Miller Office of Councilmember Maggi Fimia Office of Councilmember Rob McKenna Office of Councilmember Kent Pullen Office of Councilmember Greg Nickels | Councilmember David Irons Councilmember Larry Phillips Councilmember Louise Miller Councilmember Maggi Fimia, Legislative Aides Doug Hodson, Diane Yates Councilmember Rob McKenna Councilmember Kent Pullen Legislative Aides David Foster, Heather Marx |
| Cities and Towns in King and Snohomish counties: | |
| City of Bellevue: Office of the Mayor | Mayor Chuck Mosher; Rick Burmen, Utilities Department |
| City of Bothell: Office of the Mayor Bothell City Council Utility Committee | Mayor Michael Noblet; Jim Thompson, City Manager; Manny Ocampo, Assistant City Manager; Councilmember Bob Bandarra and Committee Staff |
| City of Brier: Office of the Mayor | Mayor Wayne Kaske; Richard Russell, Public Works Superintendent |
| City of Kenmore: City Manager's Office Kenmore City Council April 24 meeting | Stephen Anderson, City Manager Mayor Dick Taylor; Deputy Mayor Jack Crawford; Councilmembers Deborah Chase, Steve Colwell, Tika Esler, Elodie Morse and Marcia Schwendiman |
| City of Kent: City Manager's Office | Brent McFall, City Manager |
| City of Lake Forest Park: Office of the Mayor | Mayor Dave Hutchinson; Frank Zenk, Director of Public Works; Sarah Phillips, Community & Governmental Relations |
| City of Lynnwood: Office of the Mayor | Mayor Tina Roberts; Bill Vlcek, Director of Public Works |
| City of Mill Creek: City Manager's Office | Bob Stowe, City Manager; Jill Marilley, Director of Public Works; Bill Trimm, Director of Community Development |
| City of Mountlake Terrace: City Manager's Office | Will Van Ry, City Engineer; Jerry Trojan, Director of Administrative Services |
| City of Seattle: Office of the Mayor Office of Councilmember Richard Conlin | Deputy Mayor Maud Smith Daudon; Ray Hoffman, Special Assistant to the Mayor; Steve Moddemeyer, Water Resources Coordinator, Seattle Public Utilities Councilmember Richard Conlin; Tye Ferrel, Legislative Aide |
| City of Shoreline: Office of the Mayor and City Manager | Mayor Scott Jepsen; Councilmember Cheryl Lee; Bob Deis, City Manager; Kristoff Bauer, Assistant to City Manager; Joyce Nichols, City Manager's Office; Bill Clements, President, Richmond Beach Community Council |
| City of Woodinville: City Council April 10 meeting | Mayor Randy Ransom, Deputy Mayor Scott Hageman, Councilmembers Donald Brocha, Carol Bogue, Barbara Solberg, Robert Miller, Marsha Engel |
| Town of Woodway: Town Council May 1 meeting Point Wells Advisory Committee | Mayor Jan Drummond; Councilmembers Peter Block, Steve Abel, Carla Nichols, Robert Schillberg, Kent Saltonsall Hon. Carla Nichols, Hon. Peter Block, George Stead, Gary Cartisano, Terry Parker, David Willsie, Bill Toskey |

| Office/Organization | Interview Attendees |
|--|---|
| Special Districts and organizations: | |
| Alderwood Water and Sewer District: Board of Commissioners May 8 meeting | Commissioners Paul McIntyre, Laren McLaren, Larry Jones, Donna Cross; Arden Blackledge, General Manager |
| Cross Valley Water and Sewer District: Board of Commissioners May 16 meeting | Commissioners W.E. “Skip” Schott, Art Sigurdson, Dale Deierling; Gary Hajek, General Manager |
| Woodinville Water and Sewer District: Board of Commissioner May 16 meeting | Commissioners Gwenn Maxfield, Gail Herrell, Ken Goodwin, Maureen Jewitt, Walter Backstrom Bob Bandarra, General Manager |
| Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC): Regional Wastewater Services Plan Subcommittee | Dave Christensen, MWPAAC Chair, Renton Public Utilities; Scott Thomasson, Redmond Public Utilities; Walt Canter, Commissioner, Cedar River Water and Sewer District; Wes Jorgenson, Bellevue Utilities Department; Arden Blackledge, General Manager, Alderwood Water and Sewer District; Art Wadekamper, Commissioner, Shoreline Wastewater Management District; Bill Tracy, Commissioner, Southwest Suburban Sewer District |
| Port of Edmonds Office of Executive Director | Bill Toskey, Executive Director |
| Regional and community organizations and individuals: | |
| Boeing Company: Office of Local Government Affairs | Elizabeth Warman, Manager, Local Government Relations; Frank Figg, Manager, Local Government Affairs |
| Economic Development Council of Snohomish County | Deborah Knutson, President; Michael Cade, Vice President |
| Environmental Protection Agency Region 10 Office | Chuck Clarke, Regional Administrator; Randall Smith, Director, Office of Water; Lauri Hennessey, Special Assistant to the Regional Administrator |
| Connie King | Connie King, former Metro Councilmember, former Mayor and Councilmember, City of Shoreline |
| Mountains to Sound Greenway | Jim Ellis, President |
| People for Puget Sound | Kathy Fletcher, Executive Director |
| Puget Soundkeepers Alliance | Tom Putnam, Board Member |
| Richmond Beach Community Council Richmond Beach Community Council May 2 Board Meeting | Board Members: George Mauer, Susan Will, Joyce Akers, Karen Rice, Scott Becker, Ron Greeley, Bill Clements Approximately 30 – 40 people from the Richmond Beach and surrounding communities also attended |
| Suburban Cities Association (SCA): Office of the Executive Director Regional Water Quality Committee Suburban Caucus | Debby Eddy, Executive Director; Mercer Island Councilmember Judy Clibborn, President Renton Mayor Jesse Tanner, Kenmore Mayor Dick Taylor, Kirkland City Councilmember Sants Contreras, Clyde Hill City Councilmember Pat Hawkins, Debby Eddy, Executive Director, SCA; Dave Christensen, City of Renton Public Works; Kristoff Bauer, Assistant to City Manager, City of Shoreline |
| Washington State Department of Ecology Water Quality Program | John Glynn, Regional Manager; Laura Fricke, Municipal Unit Supervisor; Robert Sylvester, Environmental Engineer; Bernard Jones, Environmental Engineer |

* We apologize in advance if we have inadvertently left anyone’s name off this list.